

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 27, 2009

The Honorable Barack H. Obama, President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As Members of Congress concerned about protecting the freedom of speech in Egypt, we are writing in advance of your visit with President Mubarak to respectfully request that you strongly urge him to release human rights advocate and blogger Abdel Kareem Nabil Soliman.

Mr. Soliman, known more commonly by his Internet pen name Kareem Amer, was convicted for statements made on his personal web blog condemning Islamic extremism for its poor treatment of women and minorities. On February 22, 2007, he was sentenced to four years in prison. While we recognize his comments offended many Egyptians, this sentence set a troubling precedent. Mr. Soliman is the first blogger in the Arab world to be convicted for the expression of personal views.

We recognize that Egyptian law is sensitive to the denigration of religion. However, Egypt must honor its commitment to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It is critical that Egypt expand the scope of acceptable Internet dialogue, including the peaceful expression of views on religious extremism.

The Egyptian Constitution affords the President the right to grant amnesty or commute a sentence. President Mubarak has exercised this right on a number of occasions, including the release of political prisoner Ayman Nour on February 18, 2009.

We therefore request that you ask President Mubarak to grant amnesty to Mr. Soliman as a way to show that Egypt is a force for moderation on the Internet. By accepting broad liberties within this vast new medium, Egypt can demonstrate its role as a pioneer in showing tolerance toward the growing role of the Internet even in the Arab world.

Thank you for your attention to this precedent-setting case. We look forward to working with you on this and other human rights abuses around the world.

Sincerely,



Mark Kirk
Member of Congress



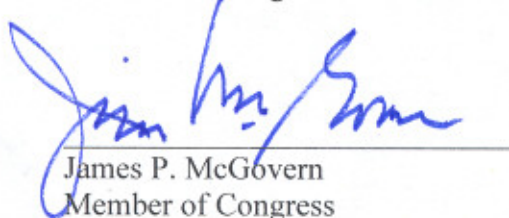
Bill Delahunt
Member of Congress



Howard L. Berman
Member of Congress



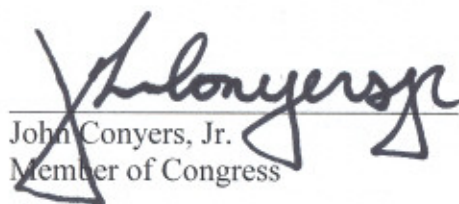
Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Scott Garrett
Member of Congress



John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



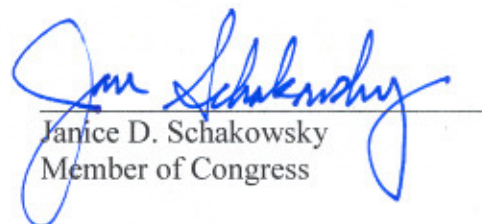
Trent Franks
Member of Congress



Brad Sherman
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Rush D. Holt
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Janice D. Schakowsky
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